Vitra x Herman Miller Launch Limited-Edition Eames Fiberglass Armchair with Steinberg Cat

Vitra and Herman Miller partner with the Eames Office to launch a limited-edition Eames Fiberglass Chair hand painted with the artwork of artist Saul Steinberg; only 500 pieces will be offered

Staged at the Eames House, Pacific Palisades, California © Eames Foundation, 2023 | © Vitra | Photo: Florian Böhm (Studio AKFB) |© The Saul Steinberg Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

On June 14, 2023, Vitra and Herman Miller, in partnership with the Eames Office, will release a limited edition of 500 Eames Fiberglass Armchairs featuring the hand-painted cat originally sketched by renowned midcentury artist and Eames friend Saul Steinberg.

Upon their debut in 1950, the Eames Shell Chairs were the world's first industrially mass-produced chairs with the seat and backrest formed from a one-piece shell. Resting on a variety of different bases, the curved, organically shaped shells offer a sensation of free-floating lightness unlike anything experienced before.

Shortly after Charles and Ray Eames developed the Shell Chairs, their good friend, artist and architect Saul Steinberg, came to visit the Eames Office in Venice, California at 901 Washington Boulevard. Steinberg had already made a name for himself with his humorous and occasionally provocative drawings of people and animals–especially cats–with which he repeatedly traversed the boundaries of traditional media.

L-R: Charles and Ray Eames © Eames Office, LLC 2023, Eames Fiberglass Armchair with nude figurine and cat by Saul Steinberg, 1950 @ Eames Office, LLC 2023, © The Saul Steinberg Foundation - Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

During his visit to the Eames Office, Steinberg spontaneously picked up a brush and drew a number of lively figures on the furniture, floors and walls of the studio. Steinberg was particularly taken with the newly designed Shell Chairs and drew flowing lines on a succession of chairs. A small, imaginative cosmos of characters and animals took shape within the Eames Office premises, and Charles and Ray Eames and several Eames Offices employees enthusiastically documented the spectacle with a series of photographs.

One of the drawn figures was a sleeping cat: Steinberg had it take a nap in one of the armchair shells. Relaxed, with its eyes closed, it seems to have found the perfect spot to rest and remain united with the chair forever.

From this universe of expressive drawings, only two vintage specimens still exist today: the cat on the armchair shell and part of a female nude, also on an armchair shell. The chair with the cat is owned by the Eames Office and archived in the Eames Institute; the chair with the female nude is on permanent loan from the Eames Office to the Vitra Design Museum.

Now, in a special collaboration between Vitra, Herman Miller, and the Eames Office, 500 limited-edition fiberglass armchairs with an exact replica of Steinberg’s original drawing will be available. For this purpose, the original chair at the Eames Institute was digitally scanned to create a 3D file. The data was used to create an exact template, which makes it possible to apply Steinberg's drawing to the fiberglass shell as faithfully as possible. The artwork is then applied manually on each individual shell by an artist, using paint which has also been painstakingly evaluated to be as close as possible to the original. Once the cat drawing has been applied, the shells are hand numbered, sealed with a protective lacquer and given an authenticity certificate and co-branded with Herman Miller and Vitra logos.

"This collaboration brings to the foreground the joy and optimism that Charles and Ray Eames consistently brought to their work. We are delighted to partner with Vitra and the Eames Office to bring some of this pleasure to the present day.” – Ben Watson, President, Herman Miller

Eames Fiberglass Armchair with Steinberg cat production images_2, © The Saul Steinberg Foundation-Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

The Eames Fiberglass Armchair with Steinberg Cat is limited to 500 pieces. These limited-edition chairs will be available to buy online at vitra.com and store.hermanmiller.com on June 14, 2023, at 12:00PM EST, and on hermanmiller.co.jp on June 15, 2023, at 12:00PM JST.

- The Steinberg Cat is used with permission of The Saul Steinberg Foundation.

- Famed worldwide for giving graphic definition to the post-war age, Saul Steinberg (1914–1999) had one of the most remarkable careers in American art. While renowned for the covers and drawings that appeared in The New Yorker for nearly six decades, he was equally acclaimed for the drawings, paintings, prints, collages, and sculptures he exhibited internationally in galleries and museums.
- 300 of the limited-edition chairs will be available in Europe and the Middle East through Vitra. Pricing for each market is available upon request. A pre-register link for these markets will be available shortly on Vitra.com.
- 180 of the limited-edition chairs will be priced at $2,500 USD and available in North America through Herman Miller.
- 20 of the limited-edition chairs will be priced at 328,000 JPY and available in Japan through Herman Miller.

About Herman Miller
Over the last century, Herman Miller has been guided by a commitment to problem-solving designs that inspire the best in people. Along the way, Herman Miller has forged critical relationships with the most visionary designers of the day, from mid-century greats like George Nelson, the Eames Office, and Isamu Noguchi, to research-oriented visionaries like Robert Propst and Bill Stumpf—and with today's groundbreaking studios like Industrial Facility and Studio 7.5. From the birth of ergonomic furniture to manufacturing some of the twentieth century's most iconic pieces, Herman Miller has pioneered original, timeless design that makes an enduring impact, while building a lasting legacy of design, innovation, and social good. Herman Miller is a part of MillerKnoll, a collective of dynamic brands that comes together to design the world we live in. For more information, visit hermanmiller.com/about.

About Vitra
Vitra is guided by the idea of linking great designers with the company's technical and cultural know-how to create relevant products and concepts for homes, offices and public spaces. Developed and engineered in Switzerland, these products are used by architects, planners, corporations and private citizens around the world to create inspiring environments.

Vitra's portfolio includes great classics of the twentieth century. Yet classics were not always classics – they started out by breaking conventional rules. In this spirit, Vitra works with contemporary designers to develop innovative solutions to old and new problems. Now in its third generation as a family company, Vitra aims to establish and maintain long-term relationships with designers, customers and employees. In keeping with this goal, product longevity has been a defining principle of the company from the beginning. For more information, visit www.vitra.com.

About Eames Office
Charles and Ray Eames founded their Los Angeles-based design practice Eames Office in 1941, producing significant contributions to the various mediums of architecture, furniture design, film, textiles, toys, exhibitions, and beyond. Through their work and its ongoing impact, the Eames Office reconceived the concept of a design studio in terms of philosophy, work ethic, and process. Since Charles' passing in 1978 and Ray's passing in 1988, the Eames Office has continued its mission as led by the next generations of the Eames family.

Today, the Eames Office remains dedicated to communicating, preserving, and extending the work of Charles and Ray Eames as a manifestation of one broad, all-encompassing goal: enriching and positively impacting people's lives and environments. The Eames Office believes that as beautiful as the objects are, the ideas behind them are just as beautiful–and essential to share. To carry out its mission, Eames Office works closely with authorized manufacturers to introduce their designs to new generations through educational programs, curated exhibitions and brand collaborations.

Website: eamesoffice.com | Instagram: @eamesoffice © 2023 Eames Office, LLC

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